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ABSTRACT

The need for administrator development is examined and general observations are offered about development programs in this conference speech. The use of growth contracts is considered. These are also called individualized development plans and offer a systematic approach to defining administrator roles and priorities, charting the direction of professional development, and assessing one's performance and growth. The thesis of this presentation is that the use of growth contracts is one of the most suitable means to encourage professional and personal enrichment, and to bring a greater measure of integrity and fairness to the process of evaluating administrators. Principles on which growth contracts are based are outlined, and one approach to formulating them is offered. It includes: definition of long-range career profile; statement of strengths and weaknesses; statement of role responsibility, institutional contribution, and means of evaluation; and statement of growth plans and means of evaluation. Consideration is also given to budget requests, the role of evaluation committees, and methods of implementing growth contracts. (LBH)

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Facilitating Administrator Development Through Growth Contracts

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Facilitating Administrator Development

Through Growth Contracts

I. Introduction

In the late 1960's student development was a topic of major interest to college and university educators. National conferences, workshops, in-service education programs, and publications were dominated by this theme. In recent years, the focus has been on faculty development. This is a needed emphasis and promises to have significant impact upon higher education. Given these two major emphases in the last decade, it is not surprising that attention is increasingly directed toward administrator development. We have come full circle in this regard, and thankfully so, for I'm sure we ca.. profit greatly from involving ourselves in formalized development programs.

II. Need for Administrator Development

There are several factors which compel administrators to consider new approaches to professional growth.

A. A new sense of management accountability or stewardship is being thrust upon colleges and universities. This call for more responsible management of our institutions is coming from Boards of Trustees, students, faculty, donors, foundations, and the government. As administrators we bear the primary obligation to respond to this challenge which will demand continuing growth on our part.

B. Due to the economic depression in American higher education and a resultant steady-state condition, there is less mobility of administrators than we have previously experienced. Without new challenges and new blood there is an inherent danger of going stale. Concern is often expressed about the problems resulting from tenured-in faculties with low turnover. However, in many institutions, we have de facto tenured-in administrators who need to be challenged with new opportunities for growth and fulfillment.

C. The growth and impact of faculty development programs will inevitably place higher expectations upon administrators for involvement in similar programs. This has been our experience at Gordon. An emphasis upon faculty development is a healthy stimulus to the creation of programs to facilitate the development of administrators.

D. The evaluation of administrators is a practice of which we know little and practice only infrequently, and then most often in a haphazard fashion. Properly structured development programs are an inevitable means of developing procedures for evaluation. Administrator evaluation

is a critical need in higher education and can be accomplished through development programs.

E. Administrator development is essential to continuing institutional vitality. While faculty have a major influence upon the ethos of a college or university, administrators, through the leadership they exercise, impact considerably upon the institution's growth and continuing viability. Programs to stimulate administrator renewal will influence institutional development in a substantial way. The executive leadership of an institution must, by example, demonstrate to others in the organization the necessity and benefit of participating in programs of personal and professional enrichment.

F. As administrators, we have an obligation to develop a body of knowledge relative to our work. The frontiers of management theory, as applied to higher education, must be extended and our practices need to be validated by research. In all honesty, we must admit that we have failed quite notably in this regard. I am suggesting that our commitment to long-range participation in professional development programs may well enable us to meet our obligations in this neglected area.

G. For most administrators participation in formalized development programs is necessary to bring relief to the day-to-day urgency which inevitably plagues us. The truth of the matter is that our good intentions regarding personal growth and professional enrichment usually get pre-empted by the administrative trivia in which we all become entangled. The good is always the enemy of the best. Somehow our well-ordered priorities always seem to become rearranged and development activities become low on our list of functional priorities. Intensity of commitment to growth programs is necessary if we are to overcome this familiar dilemma which we all experience.

III. <u>General Observations About Development Programs</u>

A. A comprehensive theory of faculty and administrator development does not exist. Hodgkinson's work on career transitions is extremely useful and ought to stimulate effort toward constructing a theory of development for teaching and administrative personnel. Evidently, practice will precede theory in this area of current concern and emphasis.

B. Many principles and practices of extant faculty development programs are generalizable to administrator development efforts. We believe growth contracts are a generalizable model.

C. Enrichment programs must be suited to each institution's particular setting, developmental stage, and current needs.

D. In their specific content or emphases, development programs must reflect a balance between institutional and individual needs. They must be formulated within the context of long-range individual career goals and institutional projections.

E. To be maximally successful, development programs must have budgetary support. There is much in the way of development activities that can be accomplished without financial resources but participation is enhanced when participants know that the institution deems this activity important by funding it at appropriate levels.

IV. Growth Contracts - Description and Principles

Growth contracts, sometimes also called individualized development plans, are a systematic approach to defining administrator roles and priorities, charting the direction of professional development, and assessing one's performance and growth. The thesis of this presentation is that growth contracts is one of the most suitable means to encourage professional and personal enrichment, and bring a greater measure of integrity and fairness to the process of evaluating administrators.

Growth contracts are based upon several principles:

1. Growth contracts should be designed according to the particular needs and abilities of each individual participant. While institutional priorities cannot be ignored, primary concern should be directed toward the uniqueness of the individual. Role definitions and insitutional assignments ought to be made with due cognizance of one's strengths. Growth plans should encourage the development of increased competency relative to one's role, assist in overcoming weaknesses, and equip one to accept new institutional assignments.

2. Growth contracts should include plans for both personal and professional enrichment. One's personal life cannot be separated from professional performance. The holistic nature of our lives must be reflected in our plans for enrichment and renewal.

3. Growth contracts are self imposed. That is, the individual participant, for the most part, sets his own objectives and means of evaluation. This removes considerable threat from the development process and is an essential factor in encouraging voluntary participation in enrichment programs. The self-imposed nature of this approach to growth is one of its principal strengths.

4. Evaluation is an inherent part of the growth contract process. Goal attainment and growth necessitate planning which includes specificity in the statement of objectives as well as criteria and procedures for assessing outcomes. The measurement of performance and growth is essential if success in this form of development is to be realized.

5. Growth contracts should be related to the institutional reward system. To provide maximum motivation, incentive for participation, and opportunities for advancement the outcomes of individually devised plans should provide an important perspective on personnel decisions.

V. Formulating Growth Contracts

The format suggested below is one approach to formulating growth contracts.

A. Long-Range Career Profile

Our experience at Gordon College has shown us that the statement of a general long-range career profile is a useful first step in developing a growth plan. At the administrative level we are using a simple statement which reflects the participants current thinking concerning possible future directions of his career. This exercise is a stimilus that we all need in reflecting on our future.

B. Statement of Strengths and Weaknesses

A straightforward statement of one's strengths and weaknesses is a necessary step in charting the direction of a growth contract. For many this proves to be difficult. It is a rare and sometimes painful exercise for one to engage in specific self-evaluation or request colleagues to assess one's strengths and weaknesses. However, the insights which result are well worth the unsettling nature of the self-examination process.

C. Statement of Role Responsibility, Institutional Contribution, and Means of Evaluation

In effect, this is a statement of priorities within one's role definition. It also reflects the particular contribution one intends to make in light of an assessment of personal strengths. Specific criteria and means for measuring one's performance must be included in this statement.

D. Statement of Growth Plans and Means of Evaluation

This is a simple statement of one's goals and activities intended to enhance personal and professional growth. Again criteria and means for measuring outcomes are included.

E. Budget Request

The budget request reflects the cost of implementing the means agreed upon to achieve the goals of the plan. If an administrator commits himself to the obligations of a growth contract as suggested here, it is reasonable to expect the institution to commit resources necessary to successfully implement the plan.

The above approach to writing growth contracts may be used with variations; indeed our faculty development program manual outlines a more detailed approach to the formulation of a growth contract.

F. Evaluation Committee

It is suggested that a committee of three persons be named by the participant. The committee's responsibilities are to:

1. Assist the participant in developing a final draft of the growth contract.

2. Meet periodically with the participant to assess progress.

3. Prepare a written summary assessment of outcomes in light of goal and evaluation criteria.

The committee should be composed of individuals, on or off the campus, who can contribute significantly to specific needs of the participant.

VI. Implementing Growth Contracts

The following steps are suggested as an appropriate way to implement the use of growth contracts.

A. Develop a rough draft of the contract.

B. Discuss rough draft with evaluation committee and administrative supervisor.

C. Revise rough draft on basis of suggestions received in step B.

D. Submit final draft to evaluation committee and development committee. Send copy to supervisor.

E. Obtain approval of budget requests. The allocation of funds is best accomplished by a development committee.

F. Carry out the plan.

G. Meet periodically with evaluation committee to discuss progress and problems.

H. At completion of plan write self-assessment statement and give to evaluation committee.

I. Meet with evaluation committee to discuss self-assessment.

J. Evaluation committee will write one consensus assessment of participant's growth related to stated goals.

K. Submit assessment statements to committee and supervisor.

VII. Conclusion

Growth contracts are a means of responding to the needs of administrators cited earlier and which we all, by daily experience, know too well. Our lives and work can become tedious and boring and we need to provide continuing activities that stretch us and enable us to meet new challenges. Development activities deserve high priority in our personal and professional lives.

Richard F. Gross, President, Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts, February 1977